104-10322-10035

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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
GLOBE
OCT 2 0 1975
M - 285,883
S - 611,946

Schorr says CIA held back on JFK

By Stephen Curwood
Globe Staff

CBS Television News Correspondent Daniel Schorr last night "alerted" the audience at Ford Hall Forum that the thread he helped unravel in the Watergate and CIA investigations is now leading, among other places, to the John F. Kennedy assassination.

"I do not want to say more than I know, that the CIA or some other agency was itself involved in the Kennedy assassination, or Martin Luther King's or the attempt on Governor Wallace's life," Schorr said. (What I am saying) is that during the investigation of the (Kennedy) assassination, the intelligence community did not tell the whole truth of what they knew."

Schorr made his reputation as a top foreign correspondent in Europe during the Cold War, then returned to Washington where he was recently awarded three television Emmys for his Watergate coverage.

Schorr made his remarks to the near-capacity crowd that came to Northeastern University auditorium to hear the third session this year of the 68-year-old Ford Hall Forum.

Last night's session was dedicated to the memory of Louis P. Smith, the key backer of the Forum in the 1940's when finances threatened to shut the intellectual institution down, Forum Chairman Reuben Lurie said.

To document his charges, Schorr said the FBI had been in touch with Lee Harvey Oswald in 1960 and in 1963, shortly before Kennedy was killed. The CIA had even tracked Oswald's movements in Mexico City in 1963, Schorr said adding the agency had also tried repeatedly to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

But when the Warren Commission asked the FBI what it knew about Oswald, (or links to Castro) it employed semantic subterfuge to say "a search of our files shows nothing," Schorr said, and "the CIA people who appeared before the Warren Commission never mentioned it . . . commission member Allen Dulles had been head of the CIA when the (Castro) murder plots were hatched.

"The CIA has been accused of a great many things . . . including involvement in the Kennedy assassination, of which there is no evidence. Perhaps if the CIA didn't have a penchant for covering up so many things, it wouldn't get accused of so many other things," Schorr said.

"There is another current problem, so vexing that it is hardly discussed . . . a massive new capacity for electronic eavesdropping that makes our antiwiretap laws obsolete," Schorr said. "The CIA and the supersecret National Security Agency can almost literally pick conversations out of the air by monitoring the microwave channels that carry most of our long distance and some of our local calls. . . . It can link its tapes to a computer that will retrieve any call that has mentioned a certain name or subject."

The CIA used this machinery to monitor conversations between the US and a certain Latin American country for six months in 1973 during a drug investigation, Schorr said. "That purpose was salutory, but the technology is fraught with broad ramifications . . . beyond the limited use that is being made of this fancy equipment lies the capacity for almost unlimited eavesdropping that has far outpaced our legal protections. . . . I suggest you should worry about it," the correspondent said.

Schorr also warned about the CIA's business connections. "The CIA itself is big business. One of its wholly-owned secret proprietary companies has made a lot of money flying charter flights, and another has a lot of money on the stock market.

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